

New York (City) Knoedler, M. & company

Descriptive Catalogue

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OF THE

*Portraits,
Etchings, and
Engravings*

PUCK ART REFERENCE
LIBRARY BY

NEW YORK
Hubert Herkomer, A. R. A.

1849-1914

EXHIBITED AT

*M. Knoedler's Gallery, New-York,
November 25, 1882.*

NEW YORK
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No 22



Hubert Herkimer

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Left Part.

PRESS OF FRANCIS HART & Co. N. Y.

PREFACE.

I HAVE invariably found that the art-loving public wants to know what a painter has to say about his own work. This fact is the only justification I would wish to offer for the accompanying crude remarks on the paintings and etchings I have brought with me to this country.

New York, Nov. 15, 1882.



No. 1. John Ruskin, Author and Philanthropist.

THIS portrait started my plan of painting a series of portraits of illustrious men of our times. I chose the medium of water-color partly because oil colors were at that time but imperfectly

within my grasp (and especially for such an occasion, when continuous sittings were given), and partly because I was then just in midst of forcing a material beyond its healthy limits. It was at that time that I painted a water-color picture seven feet long. I regret that this portrait was not painted in oils, but still rejoice to think I have the *only* portrait of that "great and good man," as our English Queen once expressed herself when speaking of John Ruskin. His friendship is to me very precious, and those sittings that I had in his little working and sleeping-room, at the top of the house, at Herne Hill, will always be memorable to me. That room in the roof, only about twelve feet square, is all the more remarkable because it was his nursery in childhood.

This man's life has been one continual struggle, and the sadness so marked in his face indicates his disappointments in the struggle. Beaten and thwarted, he still has given us words that will remain as gospel. Of him one can say, as Schumann did of a great modern musical composer, "This man had to come." He is unlike any man I ever saw.



No. 2. Archibald Forbes, War Correspondent.

HERE is a nature diametrically opposed to that of Ruskin. There is nothing that runs to waste in his nature,—compact, square, clear headed as well as strong headed,—giving him all the qualities of

the ancient knight errant. We find him correcting and exposing wherever he goes. He fears neither man nor the devil. Truth, too, is to him a clear thing, with no possibility of a second side to it. He has probably done his hazardous and arduous work better than any other man. There are many who can write; many who have the gift of observation; many who have physical endurance and pluck; but rarely are all these qualities combined in one individual, as they are in Archibald Forbes. Harsh and impatient with those who are bores to him, he is as true as steel to those to whom he extends his friendship.

His conversation during the sittings, though labored, was always terse and to the point, with much dry humor. His face, when in repose, becomes sometimes perfectly ferocious, and as I knew this did not express the best of the man, I endeavored to represent him whilst in the act of talking. No picture that I have yet done, not excepting the "Last Muster," has met with so much universal favor as this portrait.



No. 3. Lorenz Herkomer.

THIRD on the list, as I painted them, comes my father's portrait.



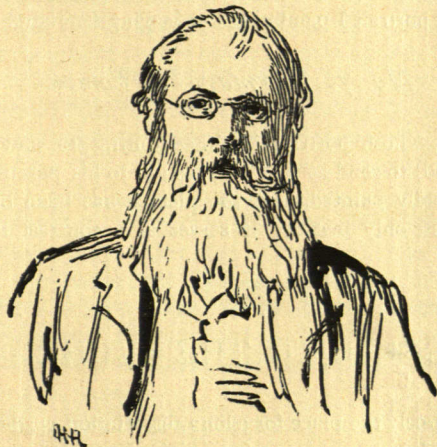
No. 4. Joseph Joachim, Musician.

JOACHIM'S frame and head are enormous in size, and his hand is enormous. The tips of the fingers (which are fine) on his left hand turn up most singularly, owing to his perpetual practice of that instrument from his fifth year. He has a strange charm for us in England. His art is great because he is first the great musician and then the "virtuoso." That is felt in every note he plays, and it must be a hard soul that can resist tears when it listens to his rendering of Beethoven's concerto. When he takes off his spectacles he sees nothing, and it is that vague look of the eye which always accompanies his solo playing, that I have tried to paint. The moment I have selected is just when a pause occurs in his solo,—he does not play, but is keeping the fingers moving on the strings as he holds the instrument under his arm.

With such power in every way it is strange to find him gentle to a fault. His whole nature is mellow and soft, and I cannot imagine him saying a harsh word. But this gentleness is not armor against the hard things of this world, and being very sensitive he suffers much. One story may not be out of place. He was violinist to the former King of Hanover. There, at the court, he gave a concert with a few other musicians, giving great delight to the audience. After the concert, the company reassembled to dine in state with the King and Queen. But the poor musicians were taken to a room in the house-keeper's apartment, where a scanty meal was prepared for those who

had made the evening worth remembering. It was more than those sensitive creatures could endure, and they left the food untouched, and went home. The next day the court-marshal came to Joachim, and told him how distressed the Queen was to find the musicians had gone without partaking of this meal, for she really meant to do them a kindness. "Oh!" said Joachim, "if I had known it was meant as a kindness I certainly would have accepted it, no matter what my feelings might have been regarding the manner in which this meal was offered us." This characterizes his gentleness. Joachim is not altogether enthusiastic, and takes matters so deliberately and justly, that he is apt to damp the young enthusiast who comes in contact with him. He himself is aware of not being able to put criticism pleasantly to the young mind, and has in consequence resigned his post as principal of the Berlin Conservatoire.

The portrait was painted in a small glass room, only ten feet by eight, selected because it was the only place that offered decent light in the house in which he lived (in London). I have made it a rule never to hesitate before difficulties when a good subject was within my reach. The picture has never been exhibited before, having only been painted this spring.



No. 5. Hans Richter, *Musical Conductor.*

THIS man was born to command. Contrast him with Schumann, for a moment. Schumann was a conductor, too; but such was his strange character, that he stood sometimes five or ten minutes, baton

in hand,—the whole orchestra ready for the stroke,—before he could make up his mind to give the signal. He sank into a reverie, and the leader found it necessary often to commence. Then at the sound of the music Schumann would *start*, heave a great sigh, and send a look of gratitude to the leader of the orchestra. A man who stands as Richter does, facing you as a lion would do, cannot fall into a reverie at the most inconvenient moment. A curious fact is, that his mind is so stored with music of all the composers, that he finds his own efforts at composing crippled by his marvelous memory of other men's work. He is unrivaled as a conductor, simply because he is so profound a musician, and yet so good a commander. His orchestras worship him and his friends love him, for he has all the warmth and strength necessary to secure both. The portrait has never been exhibited before.

*No. 6. James Russell Lowell, American Minister in
England.*

THERE are few foreigners [?] in England who are held in such esteem as Mr. Lowell, and justly so. It was no small matter to get in my painting what Emerson called "the steel of his eye." It was the last portrait I painted before leaving England.

No. 7. Herman Herkomer.

MY cousin, whose portrait I painted during his stay with me in England, to send as a Christmas gift to his parents, in Cleveland, was rapidly painted, and the picture has been brought here from Cleveland only because it serves as a contrast to the other portraits.

PREFACE TO THE ETCHINGS.

THIS is scarcely the place for a long dissertation on the art of etching, but I must express a few opinions as concisely as possible. But the general public knows next to nothing of the true merits and demerits of etching, and more nonsense has been written and talked about etching than about any other form of art. When the desire to etch takes hold of the artistic temperament, nothing can equal it in intensity; and when a collector once gets imbued with a love for this art

he can look at no other form of the "Graphic arts" with pleasure. Thus, both worker and lover of the work are apt to be narrowed by the peculiar charms of this bewitching form of artistic expression. Much stress is laid upon its being the best form for "original expression" in art. That is a forced phrase, bordering on cant. You certainly have the artists' own lines,—but never without the assistance of the printer, and the outside public would be amazed if it knew *how much* depended upon the printer. But the beauty of the line (when printed properly) carries us completely away with delight—and it is thus, I gather, that men waste their energies on trivial subjects, often unwittingly. Nothing is more deplorable than the tendency of the present day to *scribble* on copper, and people are asked to admire a mass of rambling, meaningless lines, that really express nothing. The greatest art is the most reasonable, and this holds good with the art of etching, which belongs to the *lesser arts*,—beautiful as it is. A kind of mystery has been thrown over this art, which will eventually destroy its life, if not cleared away in time. People are not to be persuaded against their reasonable powers of observation beyond a certain limit of time.

Another practice I also condemn strongly, is that of issuing *stages* of the plate, called "*states*." No plate should be issued to the public until it is completed and finished. Every artist has a right to leave a plate in any condition that appears to *him* finished, but that would be the literal state of completion—viz: when he feels he can do no more to it. The money made out of the publication of a plate should *never* be taken as a criterion of its artistic worth. Nothing is more destructive to the moral aspect of this art than to bring an antiquarian value to bear upon a few proofs taken whilst the plate is in progress. Rightly, every proof taken of the plate whilst it is in progress is of *less* value than the finished ones, because it is of necessity more imperfect, however interesting it may be to the student who is anxious to see how the plate was produced. In any case, the progressive stages of a plate should be kept under lock and key by the etcher to everybody but the student of etching. To him they ought to be visible.

The value of working directly from nature on the copper is not only much overrated, but often misconstrued. In a landscape, a few accidental lines do no harm, but when you have to group figures, and work out delicate faces, expressive of something, such an inconvenient mode of procedure must be avoided.

In landscape, some of the most beautiful qualities of the etched line are to be found in the works of Haden, Whistler, and Meryon.

There are few men who attempt figures and compositions; still, I hope to see the day when figure painters will believe that the best tonic for their art lies in the practice, between times, of the loveliest and most sympathetic of all the lesser arts.

ETCHINGS.

1878. No. 1.—“*Old Woman Reading.*”

I give the etchings somewhat in order as they were done. Some were marked at the beginning, but always included the failures and experimental plates, therefore the numbers on the plates will not meet those of the catalogue. Only about four etchings are missing, otherwise my collection is complete.

The so-called “etching fever” took hold of me in the spring of 1878, and this etching was my first effort in that direction. But I was far too excited by the novelty of seeing the work printed to think enough of finishing the plate reasonably, and it has long since been withdrawn from publication.

My etchings and engravings are printed by my own workmen at the printing-room in connection with my studio, at Bushey.

No. 2.—“*A Welsh Woman.*”

Another young and bold attempt to do something unusual. The lines are too heavily bitten and do not blend with the dry point work.

No. 3.—“*Waiting for Relief.*”

This plate was done at the same time as that of the “*Welsh Woman*,” during a visit to a friend in Wales to whose house this woman, with her desperate face and poverty stricken child, came for relief. I look back with interest upon the fine, delicate, dry point work selected to represent this coarse, hard face. The entire plate is dry point.

No. 4.—“*The Orphans.*”

Also dry point, with the addition of roulette applied to background.

No. 5.—“*Souvenir de Rembrandt.*”

Etched from a water-color drawing bearing that title.

No. 6.—“*In Trouble.*”

This was not altogether an unsuccessful attempt to make a face round with very few lines. My early work was mostly in dry point,

because it seemed the more natural and direct method to me as a wood-draughtsman.

No. 7.—“Richard Wagner.”

This is entirely the work of the burin. It was done from the portrait I painted of the “Meister” in the spring of seventy-seven, and was the enforced work of seven days.

No. 8.—“Dr. Müller-Strübing.”

In this portrait the bitten lines are not of great value, all the strength being obtained by means of the burin.

No. 9.—“The Swing.”

Also a portrait. The figure is burin work (with the feeling of a wood-draughtsman), and the rest is all “chance work”—relying on the accidents of biting in with acids through imperfect grounds.

1879. *No. 10.—“Words of Comfort.”*

Probably the most popular plate an etcher can boast of, owing, I presume, more to the subject than to the treatment. It was etched for the London “Portfolio,” and it may not be out of place here to mention that the etched work I have done for magazines (which cannot pay the etcher in the ordinary sense of the word) has brought me the greatest satisfaction, for I have received a number of letters from strangers thanking me for having put a good etching within their means to purchase.

No. 11.—“Portrait of an Old Lady.”

This plate was accidentally destroyed, a fact I lament because only four impressions exist, and I feel it to have some of the best qualities of dry point work in the face.

No. 12.—“Alfred Tennyson.”

Here was a certain impatience shown with the process of etching by my trying to render *tones* (which I felt so necessary for larger heads) in some other way than by lines. I was not aware of the beauties of mezzotint then, and took shelter in that most incommodious method—aquatint. The methods employed do not amalgamate pleasantly. However, this stimulated me to look further, which search resulted in the adaptation of mezzotint for subjects that required much gradation of tone.

No. 13.—“ The Blind Shepherd.”

A pretty story that was told me of a Welsh shepherd who, though old and blind, still insisted upon being taken to his old haunts, from which he could realize what was around him. Originally etched for a magazine; but as the magazine failed, it was separately published.

No. 14.—“ Portrait of Myself and Children.”

This is certainly the best specimen of head-etching I have to show. It was etched in '79, for the biographical work in which it appears, and my children serve, I think, as the best remarque, under the circumstances. There is the happiest mixture of dry point with the bitten line, so that the one supplies the want of the other, of which I was not fully aware at the time of doing.

No. 15.—“ Sheep-binding.”

Even with this title, the subject is hardly clear; it is a further example of my harping upon tone, at that period, and wasting time with aquatint. One plate remains just as I left it,—an experiment,—although done simultaneously with my own portrait, whilst I was camping out in Wales, in '79.

No. 16.—“ Touched.”

Etched for the Magazine of Art (London). It represents a “Sennrin” of the Bavarian Alps, returning from the Alm, and the tone of the boy’s zither has touched her heart.

No. 17.—“ The Quarrel.”

Etched, as all the others are,—unless mention is made of the painting which has been repeated,—from drawings made expressly for the subject. The work is the mixture of the bitten line and dry-point work.

*No. 18.—“ Boys.”**No. 19.—“ Shy.”*

Both experimental plates, put aside after completion, for in both cases the models inspired the work; in the one case the bigger boy’s face, whose type brought back to me Fred. Walker, and in the other the girl’s face, a little maid of my village, Bushey.

1880. No. 20.—“*Remarque.*”

Belonging to the mezzotint plate of “Grandfather’s Pet.” It is a study of my father with my children on his knees. Dry point.

No. 21.—“*Our Messenger.*”

A Welshman, who acted as messenger for our camp, in Wales. It was done to accompany my notes on landscape painting in the “Portfolio.”

No. 22.—“*Two Heads.*”

These also accompanied the article in the “Portfolio.” It was done to show the same head treated in two materials; in pure etching, and in mezzotint.

No. 23.—*Portrait.*

Pure dry point.

No. 24.—*Portrait.*

This head has the same qualities that my own portrait has, and is handled similarly. This plate has not been published or issued.

No. 25.—“*Grace Before Meat.*” No. 26.—“*Love and Faith.*”

No. 27.—“*Babes in the Wood.*”

These three plates were *worked together*, and bear traces of the same feeling. The last named was done for “The Art Journal.”

1881. No. 28.—“*The Shepherd’s Daughter.*”

This is one of the happiest of all my etchings (with but one exception). It was published by an American in a portfolio of other etchings. The subject of the figure was afterward introduced into a landscape.

No. 29.—*Portrait.*

The founder of the German Athenæum, London, etched to distribute among the members after his death. It was etched from a water-color drawing of mine.

No. 30.—“*Granny’s Story.*”

This etching competes with the Shepherd’s Daughter. It is a more difficult subject to render than the other, and taken altogether is the best etching I have done. The original from which it was etched is an oil picture of the same size, painted the year previous.

No. 31.—“Portrait of Dr. Garrod.”

Etched for a biographical work.

No. 32.—“Caroline Fox.”

Etched from an indifferent chalk drawing, for a friend who has brought out his notes of this interesting woman. She knew all the remarkable men from Shelley to Holman Hunt.

1882. No. 33.—“Portrait of Cecil Lawson.”

A dear friend of mine, who died this summer, under painful circumstances. A bright nature, full of genius, whose landscapes will be remembered by the frequenters of the Grosvenor Gallery. I etched this for biographical work about to be published. It is pure dry point.

PREFACE TO THE MEZZOTINTS.

I HAVE shown how I was driven to some other method than the line in order to produce certain effects. So I obtained the materials from an engraver for the preliminary experiments in laying what is called the “ground.” It was by no help, but by accident during the experiments, that I discovered the character I so longed to see in the work. But the means by which I obtained the effects were not quite right, and I then found a young, intelligent engraver, who took up my thread of discovery and helped me to perfect it. The object is to bring under control, with the best materials, the effects of workmanship we so admire in old mezzotints, but which were in those cases the results of bad tools. And this also is the cause why among so many of the old beautiful mezzotints we find so much that is bad. Then I am probably one of the first to revive the use of copper in the place of steel for mezzotints. The introduction of steel came through the larger demand of proofs from a plate. But now there is a chemical process which enables us to deposit a coating of steel over the finished copper plates—infinitesimally thin. This surface can be renewed, and the plate will yield a great number of excellent proofs. This is a great boon, as it enables us to adapt a good material to modern conditions. A copper mezzotint would only yield thirty good proofs, and as on steel the same depth cannot be obtained (the hardness of the metal does not permit the work to enter deeply)

we must hail an invention that enables the artistic qualities to be applied *practically*.

Mezzotint engraving needs more patience in the worker than etching. It should not be compared to etching, as it produces effects and qualities altogether out of the reach of etching: at the same time it has none of that clearness so easily obtained by the needle. But it is the *best* means for reproducing the broad touches of the brush. It is very difficult to handle the scraper, and still more difficult to sharpen it. There are altogether far more technical difficulties connected with mezzotint engraving than with etching, but it is, nevertheless, equally exciting and enjoyable.

MEZZOTINTS.

1880. No. 34.—“*Grandfather's Pet.*”

I give the mezzotints also in the order in which they were done. My first attempt and struggle in this material; more I need not say about it. The original is a large water-color drawing.

No. 35.—“*John Ruskin.*”

A free rendering of the water-color drawing. In pure mezzotint without a line.

No. 36.—“*Portrait of my Mother.*”

From a water-color drawing.

No. 37.—“*The Poacher's Fate.*”

From a water-color drawing. It is a mixture of etching and mezzotint, like the first plate.

No. 38.—“*The Wood Cutters.*”

Also from a water color drawing, done in the same way as the last-named.

1881. No. 39.—“*Sheridan,*” after Sir Joshua Reynolds.

This was my first attempt to render another man's work. It is pure mezzotint.

No. 40.—“*Fancy Free.*”

From studies made of my own little girl, as the subject has not yet been painted. Also in pure mezzotint.

No. 41.—“ Child with Apple,” after Greuze.

In pure mezzotint without the use of line.

No. 42.—Landscape, after Joseph Knight.

Joseph Knight was anxious to be shown the working details of mezzotinting, so I mezzotinted one of his own landscapes, in order to acquaint him with the mechanism, and I am happy to say he has since done most beautiful work in this method. It is printed in two colors.

No. 43.—“ The Provost of King’s College, Cambridge.”

From my painting of him, for distribution among the fellows of the college. In pure mezzotint.

No. 44.—Portrait.

From my painting. In mixed style of line and mezzotint. Done for distribution among the subscribers to the portrait.

No. 45.—“ The Earl of Beaconsfield,” after J. E. Millais, R. A.

In mixed style.

1882. *No. 46.—“ The Master of Trinity College, Cambridge.”*

From my painting of him, in pure mezzotint. This must be classed with the *best* of my mezzotint work up to this period.

No. 47.—“ Caaller Herrin,” after J. E. Millais, R. A.

This plate was a great test to mechanical as well as artistic skill. Here I must add that I cannot detect the slightest difference in artistic sensation when copying my own work, or that of another man. In both cases the picture has to be *reduced, repropotioned* in its tones, and interpreted from the engraver’s point of view. I am no longer the painter when I engrave my work, but purely the engraver or interpreter.

No. 48.—Portrait.

This I would like to place above the “Master of Trinity,” for solidity of work and largeness of manner. It has no line in it, all being mezzotint. My list ends with my last work on copper.